

- *Hearing Shows Desperate Need for Hall's COMBAT PTSD Act* -
- *Veterans Say Enactment of COMBAT PTSD Act is Vitaly Important* - Washington, DC – In his fight to gain urgently needed treatment and compensation for veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), U.S. Rep. John Hall, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, led an oversight hearing yesterday to examine the relationship between PTSD and combat with the enemy. Hall has authored legislation to make it easier for veterans with PTSD to receive disability benefits and treatment.

Hall's legislation, the COMBAT PTSD Act: Compensation Owed for Mental Health Based on Activities in Theater, will remove the onus from any veteran diagnosed with PTSD to have to prove that a specific incident during combat caused his or her PTSD. Hall's COMBAT PTSD Act will make it so that any veteran diagnosed with PTSD who served in combat will automatically have the ability to get treatment and benefits for the service injury of PTSD. The COMBAT PTSD Act redefines the legislative meaning of "combat with the enemy," expanding it to include combat service on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war or in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities.

"The nature of wartime service has changed as many can agree," said Hall. "Warfare encompasses acts of terrorism, insurgency, and guerilla tactics. There is no more front line and the enemy may not be readily identifiable."

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) current policy forces veterans to "prove" that a specific stressor during a war triggered their PTSD, even if they have already been diagnosed and been receiving treatment for the condition. Veterans must track down incident reports, buddy statements, present medals, and leap other hurdles to validate to the VA that their PTSD was a result from their war service.

"The current policy violates common sense," stated Hall. "A soldier who does not have PTSD before entering a war, who returns home from war with PTSD, should not have to prove that his PTSD is a result of a specific experience during war. The wars America is fighting right now have no front or rear lines. Danger can strike in any place, anywhere. It is clear that the current regulations are in need of change." Numerous veterans' service organizations testified at Hall's hearing on the behalf of America's veterans, saying the COMBAT PTSD Act is needed to reflect the current state of warfare.

Carolyn Schapper of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America testified that the COMBAT PTSD Act "is a common sense solution to a complex problem that continues to change as the nature of warfare evolves."

Terri Tanielian of the RAND Corporation, Study Co-Director of the Invisible Wounds of War Study Team testified that left untreated, PTSD in veterans post-deployment could cost America up to \$6.2 billion over the next two years in loss of productivity.

"The costs of these invisible wounds go beyond the immediate costs of mental health treatment," said Tanielian. "Adverse consequences that may arise from post-deployment mental and cognitive impairments include suicide, reduced physical health, increased engagement in unhealthy behaviors, substance abuse, unemployment, poor performance while at work,

homelessness, marital strain, domestic violence, and poor parent-child relationships."

Senator Chuck Schumer has introduced the companion version of Hall's COMBAT PTSD Act in the Senate.

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